RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS
FOR THE BLIND

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Second Article in the Series

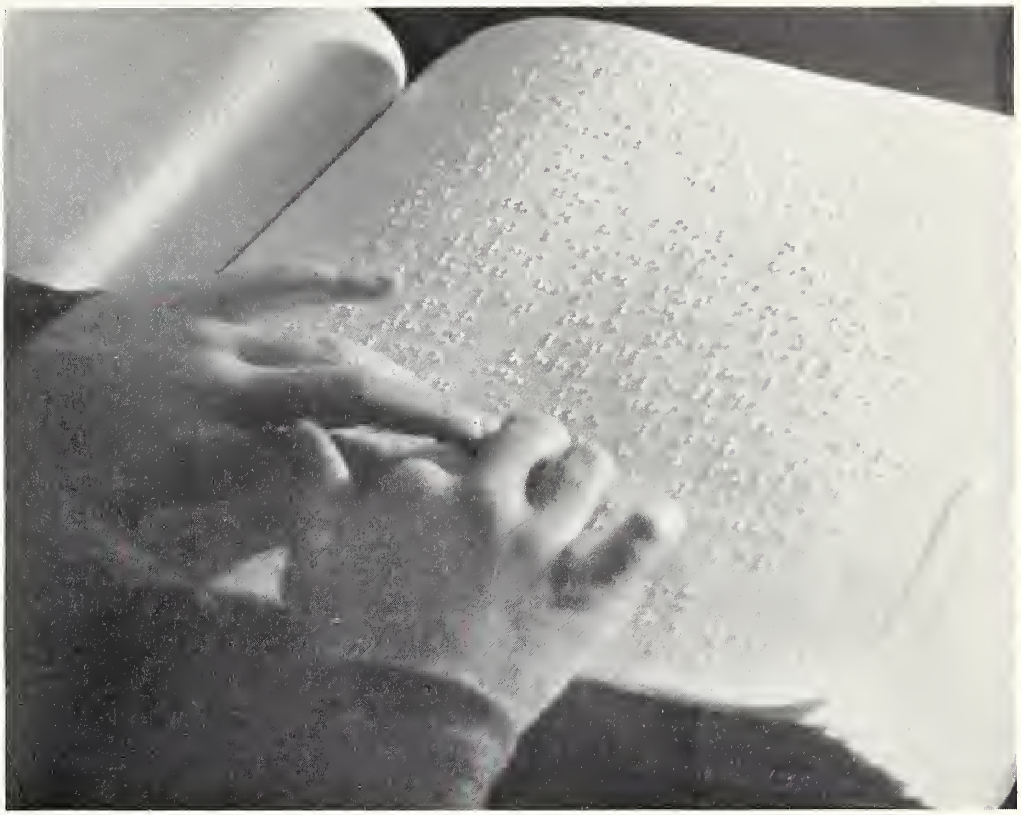
Residential Schools for the Blind

by Elise H. Martens, Specialist in the Education of Exceptional Children

★ ★ ★ The organized education of the blind in the United States is a development of the past hundred years. The decade from 1830 to 1840 saw residential institutions for blind children established in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Virginia. Other States took action in succeeding years until at the present time every State makes provision for the education of the blind either in a school within its own boundaries or in a school of a neighboring State. There are also such schools in Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Philippine Islands. The total enrollment in all residential schools established for this group is approximately 6,000 pupils. In addition, about 500 blind children are being educated in day school classes organized in some of the larger city school systems of the country.

Some people suppose that a residential school for the blind serves or should serve only totally blind children. This is far from the case. There are many children who have some vision, yet insufficient to enable them to participate in regular educational activities even with the aid of sight-saving techniques. These are sometimes classified as "educationally blind" and include children who have vision of less than 20/200; that is, they are unable to see even at a distance of 20 feet what a person with normal vision can see at a distance of 200 feet. Yet between 20/200 vision and total blindness there are degrees of sight which are valuable assets to the children possessing them. Almost every school for the blind enrolls a number of pupils in this low-vision group as well as totally blind children.

Visually handicapped children having better than 20/200 vision are generally considered candidates for sight-saving classes in the public day schools. There are, to be sure, some border-line cases and other special problems which find their way into residential schools, especially when the day school system of the State does not make the necessary provision for them. The primary concern of the residential school, however, is the education of children whose vision is either totally lacking or too limited for the ordinary type of sight-saving instruction offered in day schools.



Courtesy of the Wisconsin School for the Blind.

Doubly Handicapped Pupils

To be deprived of vision is tragic enough, but when that loss is accompanied by an additional serious handicap the lot of the child becomes increasingly difficult. It is estimated that there are about 2,000 people in the United States who are deprived of both sight and hearing. Educational facilities for deaf-blind children have in the past been exceedingly meager. The life and achievements of Helen Keller are a well-known example of what can be accomplished despite such handicaps, and recent developments have attempted to meet in an organized way the special needs of children so afflicted. Centers for the education of the deaf-blind have been established in connection with two schools for the blind located in New York and Massachusetts. At other residential schools attention is being given to individual cases through the efforts of teachers specially trained for the work.

So also there are blind-crippled children, blind-subnormal children, and some deaf-blind-feebleminded. Modern schools for the blind attempt to serve the needs of mentally retarded blind children if the intellectual deficiency is not extreme. In that case, however, the child becomes a problem of the school for the mentally deficient.

In short, the school for the blind must meet not only the problems of visual deficiency common to all its charges, but also the wide array of pupil differences found in any school for the seeing. There are physical abnormalities, emotional disturbances, personality difficulties, and intellectual deviations. All of these the residential school must recognize, and its guidance program must serve the individual needs of every pupil entrusted to its care.

The Curriculum

The American Association of Instructors of the Blind has called attention to the fourfold aim in the education of the blind: Physical efficiency, social adjustment, academic achievement, and vocational preparation. It has emphasized the fact that the course of study in the residential school should be comparable to that of the public-school system of the State, with the necessary adjustments in emphasis and in methods. The high-school course is expected to be the equivalent of the 4-year course of day high schools. This frequently makes it possible for the high-school student of advanced standing to take his work in the local high school with seeing boys and girls, with provision for assistance in reading assignments. In general, the course

Little people in the playroom at the Kentucky School for the Blind.

of study in the elementary and secondary grades includes the regular academic subjects, health and physical education, musical activities, a variety of the manual arts, and some types of vocational or prevocational training.

The progressive residential school for the blind is just as keenly alert to modern advances in education as is the regular day school for the seeing. Instructional units of activity, recreational programs, dramatic organizations and other "extracurricular" activities, the use of cumulative records and standardized tests, and a guidance procedure that explores each child's capacities, interests, and difficulties are elements of an educational program no less applicable to schools for the blind than to schools for the seeing.

Throughout his educational career, the blind student in a residential school is encouraged to participate in experiences common to seeing pupils and thus to prepare himself for adult living in a seeing world. It is not unusual to see blind children actively engaged in the home-making laboratory, at the woodworker's or cobbler's bench, at the sewing machine, at the typewriter or the switchboard, on the farm, in the garden and the greenhouse, on the athletic field and the dance floor, in the swimming pool, in boy and girl scout troops, in bands and orchestras. One cannot help but marvel at the skill with which a blind student can take the high jump, or weed the vegetable garden, or turn out a piece of furniture, or prepare and serve a meal.

Special Emphases

Without sight, the blind child must obviously depend upon other senses to make contact with his environment. The use of methods involving the senses of touch and of hearing are important features in his education. The teaching of Braille reading and writing is one example of tactile methods; the use of dissected wooden relief maps in teaching geography is another example. Miniature and life-sized models constitute the basis for studying the character of buildings, bridges, dams, animals, natural phenomena, and a wide variety of other experiences.

For example, a lighthouse model built accurately to scale, as shown in the picture on the following page, was used in the fourth grade of a residential school to teach a better understanding of the functions of lighthouses and the responsibilities of lighthouse keepers. Their relationship to the whole field of navigation and human safety was explored, and the topic became the absorbing center about which an entire activity unit was built. No description, however vivid, could have taken the place of the opportunity to feel this model from top to bottom in all its parts. Thus the blind child's fingers serve as both fingers and eyes, and sensitive indeed do they become with continued practice.

His ears, too, serve the blind child well, and he learns to make the most of them on the playground and on the street as well as in the classroom. His Braille reading is supplemented by use of the talking book, a machine equivalent to a phonograph on which specially constructed records are played bringing to the listener an entire story or other piece of literature. The use of the talking book is limited, however, by the comparatively small number of records as yet available. Most of the classroom materials needed are not thus prepared, and hence Braille books still constitute the blind child's major source of written information.

Music

Musical activity is prominent in the school for the blind, not because they are as a group peculiarly gifted in this direction, but because it is one of the fields in which they can generally approximate the achievements of seeing pupils. Those who are capable of specializing in some form of musical work are given the opportunity to develop their talents. Among the instructional offerings in music included in the curriculum of residential schools are: Piano, organ, voice, chorus, harmony, music history, Braille music, orchestra and band, with individual instruction on various instruments.

Occupational Experiences

It is conceded that the first responsibility of schools for the blind is to lay the foundation for satisfying human relationships through general education and social adjustment. They are not vocational schools, nor should they place undue emphasis upon this phase of the educational program. At the same time the need of vocational preparation is recognized, for some pupils as a part of the secondary school course, but for a larger number as subsequent to it. The exploratory occupational experiences offered to all secondary pupils may be sufficiently varied to constitute an excellent foundation on the basis of which a final vocational choice can be made.

The limitations of occupational outlets hitherto imposed upon those deprived of their sight have given direction to the vocational courses offered. Broom and mop-making, chair caning, basket weaving, and piano tuning are some of the time-honored activities still unduly emphasized in many schools. Some of the more progressive and better equipped institutions, however, are pioneering in other fields, offering courses in agriculture, radio, some phases of office work, salesmanship, shoe repair, and domestic service. Artificial restrictions are being removed both by the blind themselves and by educators of the blind, so that vocational activities once thought utterly impossible for them are being undertaken with optimism and success. For some, the university or professional school offers specialized training in intellectual or artistic pursuits beyond the secondary level.

Administration of Schools

Of the 58 residential schools for the blind reporting statistical data to the Office of

A lighthouse model 26 inches high, used at the Ohio State School for the Blind.

Education for the year 1935–36, 23 in continental United States and 2 in the outlying parts are administered either by the State or Territorial educational authorities or through a cooperative relationship with such authorities. Fifteen schools are administered exclusively by State educational agencies, and each State legislative session sees others added to the group.

There can be no doubt that residential schools for the blind are a part of the public educational program of the State. As such they are logically the responsibility of the same agency which administers the rest of the educational program. With such an arrangement, blind boys and girls are not objects of charity sent to a "home" or a welfare institution, but they have a real place among the elementary and secondary pupils of the State. As members of that group they are entitled to all the benefits that modern education has to give. And modern citizens and educators should see that they get them.

For detailed statistical data concerning residential schools for handicapped children, see Office of Education Bulletin 1937, No. 2, vol. II, Ch. VI, Statistics of Special Schools and Classes for Exceptional Children.—*Editor*

Australian Conference

The First Biennial Conference of the Australian Association for Pre-School Child Development was held at the University of Melbourne January 30 to February 4, 1939. Discussions were conducted on educational practices for children at the 2-, 4-, and 6-year levels, on child health and health education, child guidance and parent education, creative art and music, records, and social service work. Among those attending were teachers and members of executive boards from the different State kindergarten unions, physicians, nutritionists, welfare workers, and directors of teacher-preparation institutions. Visual education material on nutrition and hygienic conditions for building child health were demonstrated.

Among the exhibits were floor plans of the model child development centers now being constructed in the capital cities of each of the five States. The building of these centers and a 5-year program are being financed under the Federal Coronation Grant of $500,000. The general supervision of these centers is under the Federal education officer, Christine M. Heinig—formerly of the Child Development Institute of Teachers College, Columbia University—and the Federal medical officer, Dr. F. W. Clements.

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Cook County Report

Cook County, Ill., recently issued a pictorial publication entitled "Highlights of Three Years' Building Progress" in that county and showing some unusually fine structures which, according to the statement of County Superintendent Noble J. Puffer, were built at a "relatively low cost per unit" and which combine beauty and utility. The pamphlet shows interiors as well as exteriors, library facilities, a "bookmobile" which carries reading materials of a variety of kinds to the more isolated schools, museum and science facilities, fireproof storage space, playground equipment, and visual aids to instruction in use.

Council Library

Cook County reports also a council concerned with the use of auditory and visual aids to instruction which functions widely in the suburban sections of the county adjacent to the city of Chicago. The council now has a library of educational materials valued at approximately $9,000, cataloged and annotated with descriptive paragraphs designed to correlate the use of films and slides with courses of study and textbooks.

N. E. A. Radio

The National Education Association announces the following time schedule for its weekly radio broadcasts:

EVERY WEDNESDAY ON NBC (RED)

Our American Schools

6:00 p. m. Eastern	4:00 p. m. Mountain
5:00 p. m. Central	3:00 p. m. Pacific

EVERY WEDNESDAY ON CBS NETWORK

This Living World

2:30 p. m. Eastern	12:30 p. m. Mountain
1:30 p. m. Central	11:30 a. m. Pacific

EVERY THURSDAY ON CBS NETWORK

New Horizons

2:30 p. m. Eastern	12:30 p. m. Mountain
1:30 p. m. Central	11:30 a. m. Pacific

EVERY SATURDAY ON NBC (RED)

Our American Schools

10:30 a. m. Eastern	8:30 a. m. Mountain
9:30 a. m. Central	7:30 a. m. Pacific

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Pilgrimages Announced

The Junior Members Round Table of the New Jersey Library Association, aware of historical treasures which are largely unknown and little appreciated, is promoting a series of tours to historic spots as its part in the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the New Jersey Library Association. Focal points will center on the 13 historically important libraries founded before 1800.

Those wishing further information regarding these pilgrimages, should write to Elizabeth Madden of the Montclair Public Library, Montclair, N. J., for a copy of the pamphlet prepared for the occasion.

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Will Share Experiences

The health section of the World Federation of Education Associations, which meets in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, August 6–11, 1939, is preparing a conference in which leaders and teachers, from all parts of the world, will share their experiences in health education, health services and physical education in the schools.

Program and information regarding especially arranged tours can be secured from the Executive Secretary, Health Section Secretariat, 200 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Expenditures for School Plant Operation

by Lester B. Herlihy, Associate Statistician

★ ★ ★ Comparative data from a study of the total amounts expended for the operation of the school plant in cities of 100,000 population and more for the years 1930, 1934, and 1936, respectively, are presented in the accompanying summary table. The data are taken from the reports made by city school systems to the Office of Education for the Biennial Survey of Education.

Annual Cost Per Pupil

From the year 1930 to 1934 the average expenditure per pupil for operation of the physical plant of the school system declined from $10.98 to $9.47, a decrease of $1.51 per pupil, or 13.7 percent. The return to more normal spending restored 4 percent of this reduction by 1936 when the amount per pupil was $9.86 or about 10 percent less than the 1930 figure.

The operation item is divided into four subitems: (1) Wages of custodians, engineers, and others engaged in the operation activities; (2) supplies for custodians and engineers; (3) fuel, light, and water; and (4) other expenses for the operation of the school plant. For each of the subitems and all combined, the per capita costs are computed on the basis of the number of pupils in average daily attendance.

The cities of 100,000 to 1,000,000 population are grouped in seven regions according to geographical location. This arrangement brings together cities which are conditioned by factors common to a given region, and thus gives greater comparability to the data.

Regional comparisons reflect the differences in factors which influence the amount of the expenditure for operation of the school plant. For example, in the northeast region the average expenditure per pupil for wages of custodians, engineers, and others was $7.93 for 1936; in the southern and southwestern regions for the same year it was $3.74 and $3.52, respectively. The differences reflect the higher wage scales prevailing in the cities of the northeastern region and the greater responsibilities of custodians and engineers due to differences in climate between the North and South. The difference in volume of fuel consumed between cities of the northern and southern regions, as evidenced in the expenditure per pupil of $3.65 for the fuel and utility item in the northeast, and $3.14 in the Great Lakes regions as compared with the expenditure of $1.68 in the southern, and $1.49 in the southwestern regions, shows one influence of climate as a factor in determining expenditures.

Supplies for Custodians and Engineers

For the item of supplies for custodians and engineers, the cities of the Pacific-coast region had an expenditure per pupil consistently greater for each of the three periods than that reported by the cities of the other regions.

The 1936 average expenditure for all sections of 26 cents per pupil for operation supplies is a 33⅓-percent reduction on the 1930 amount of 39 cents per pupil. Comparative regional expenditures per pupil for these supplies reveal considerable difference in amount, particularly between cities of the northern and southern regions. Factors of economy and of climate may both enter as elements in causing such marked difference in this expenditure between regions.

The miscellaneous expense item decreased in 1936 as compared with 1930 and 1934 in all regions. However, this general trend of the miscellaneous item would appear to indicate that a stricter classification or more exact distribution was being made of the various subitems to their proper accounts.

The larger proportion, 60 percent of the total expenditure for operation of the school plant for these large city systems, was spent for wages and pay for custodians, engineers, firemen, switchboard operators, matrons, watchmen, and others connected with this major function. Fuel, light, water, power, etc., took 30 to 35 percent, and the other two subitems of supplies and of miscellaneous expenses averaged together not more than 5 percent.

Average expenditures per pupil, by public-school systems, in cities of from 100,000 to 1,000,00 population for operation of the physical plant, 1930, 1934, and 1936

Items	Per pupil expenditure for each region [1]							
	North-east	Great Lakes	North Missis-sippi Valley	South-ern [2]	South-western	Rocky Moun-tain	Pacific coast	All regions
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Wages for custodians and engineers:								
1930	$8.39	$7.00	$7.58	$4.17	$4.06	$4.67	$6.79	$7.
1934	7.51	5.80	6.35	3.21	2.88	4.17	5.29	6.
1936	7.93	6.34	6.74	3.74	3.52	4.56	6.72	6.
Supplies for custodians and engineers:								
1930	.42	.44	.51	.19	.31	.35	.47	.
1934	.26	.26	.30	.14	.22	.21	.42	.
1936	.30	.30	.31	.17	.30	.23	.48	.
Fuel, water, and light:								
1930	3.99	3.60	3.36	1.81	1.73	2.44	2.53	2.
1934	3.39	3.11	2.70	1.41	1.29	1.68	1.96	2.
1936	3.65	3.14	2.82	1.68	1.49	1.98	2.50	2.
Miscellaneous expense:								
1930	.46	.54	.24	.25	.34	.47	1.01	.
1934	.28	.29	.25	.13	.18	.48	.60	.
1936	.30	.35	.31	.14	.20	.37	.36	.
All items:								
1930	13.26	11.58	11.69	6.42	5.58	7.94	10.80	10.
1934	11.44	9.46	9.60	4.89	4.57	6.54	8.27	9.4
1936	12.18	10.13	10.18	5.73	5.51	7.14	10.06	9.
1930, 1934, and 1936 combined	12.91	10.35	10.26	5.64	5.23	7.28	9.83	10.

[1] The following 28 States contain the cities with populations of 100,000 to 1,000,000 that comprise the several regions used i this table: 1. Northeast—Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island; 2. Grea Lakes—Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin; 3. North Mississippi Valley—Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, and Missouri; Southern—Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Tennessee, and Virginia; 5. Southwestern—Oklahoma an Texas; 6. Rocky Mountain—Colorado and Utah; 7. Pacific Coast—California, Oregon, and Washington.

[2] Excluding Washington, D. C.

Rural Youth

(Concluded from page 196)

foundly for good the organization and administration of education in the States than a amount of about $10,000,000 to be distribute annually through the Office of Education t the States for studies, many of which woul be cooperative, and for demonstrations. A small percentage of this sum should be available to the Office of Education for the administration of the studies and demonstration which would be wholly under the control o State departments of education and othe educational agencies. Such a sum woul prove to be an excellent investment for th Federal Government, for many reasons, bu one certain result alone would justify it namely, the most scientific determination o long-time school-building programs. Durin the years in the immediate future the Federa Government seems destined to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in school building as a part of its Public Works Program. Suc fundamental studies as have been suggeste as being needed, if constantly pursued, woul effect large economies through better plans fo locating and relating the functions of schoo buildings in properly reorganized school districts, to say nothing of the incalculable benefits to youth which would accrue from a ver general improvement in all features of th school programs.

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